

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY EUR/PP: WZIMMERMANN
APPROVED BY EUR: AAHARTMAN
EUR/WE:EMROWELL
EUR:LBLAINGEN
C - JDOBBINS
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TO ALL EUROPEAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJECT: THE SPANISH COMMUNIST PARTY THEN AND NOW

1. THE FOLLOWING POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PCE, FOR YOUR BACKGROUND USE, IS IN RESPONSE TO SEVERAL REQUESTS MADE DURING THE RECENT DCM/POLITICAL COUNSELORS MEETING IN BRUSSELS. ITS BASIC THESIS IS THAT, WHILE THE PCE IS A LEADING DISSIDENT AGAINST SOVIET POSITIONS WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT, IN THE SPANISH CONTEXT IT RETAINS, FOR HISTORICAL REASONS, SOMETHING OF A STALINIST IMAGE AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC, THOUGH NOT AMONG MUCH OF THE POLITICALLY ACTIVE LEFT.

2. IN THE YEARS PRECEDING THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR THE NON-COMMUNIST LEFT WAS VERY POWERFUL IN SPAIN. THE TWO STRONGEST PARTIES -- THE SOCIALISTS, WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE
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POLITICAL PROCESS DURING THE REPUBLIC, AND THE ANARCHISTS, WHO CHOSE NOT TO -- EACH CONTROLLED A LARGE TRADE UNION. THE COMMUNISTS WERE SO WEAK THAT PRIMO DE RIVERA, THE DICTATOR DURING THE 20'S, DID NOT EVEN BOTHER TO SUPPRESS

THEM; THE PARTY HAD FEWER THAN A THOUSAND MEMBERS IN 1929. AS A RESULT OF THE POPULAR FRONT VICTORY IN THE ELECTIONS OF 1936, THE COMMUNISTS GOT ONLY 16 SEATS IN THE CORTES (AS COMPARED TO 89 FOR THE SOCIALISTS). IT WAS DURING THE

CIVIL WAR THAT THE COMMUNISTS -- IN EFFECT, AGENTS OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY -- MADE THEIR METEORIC RISE. THEY GAINED IN INFLUENCE AGAINST THEIR COALITION PARTNER, THE SOCIALISTS, AND BY THE END OF THE LOSING WAR EFFORT THEY CONTROLLED THE DEFENSE MINISTRY -- AND VIRTUALLY ALL THE ARMED FORCES ON THE REPUBLICAN SIDE -- AND WERE CLOSE TO THE POINT AT WHICH THEY COULD HAVE TAKEN OVER THE GOVERNMENT, OR AT LEAST WHAT WAS LEFT OF IT.

3. HOW DID THEY DO IT? FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT, THEY CONTROLLED THE SUPPLY OF SOVIET ARMS WHICH WAS ESSENTIAL TO THE REPUBLICAN WAR EFFORT. SECOND, THEY ESPOUSED A FAIRLY MODERATE SOCIAL POLICY, FAR TO THE RIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE, OF THE ANARCHISTS, WHO WERE TRYING TO MAKE A SOCIAL REVOLUTION WHILE FIGHTING FRANCO. (THIS MODERATION HELPED ACCOUNT FOR THE EXPLOSION OF THE PCE FROM AN ESTIMATED 15,000 MEMBERS IN JULY 1936 TO OVER A MILLION MEMBERS BY THE WAR'S END. THE PCE CONVERTED ITSELF INTO A BOURGEOIS PARTY FOR THE DURATION.) AND THIRD, THEY HAD BETTER DISCIPLINE AND ORGANIZING CAPACITY THAN THE OTHER PARTIES. ANOTHER REASON -- STILL REMEMBERED IN SPAIN -- IS THEIR RUTHLESS EFFORT TO TRY TO EXTERMINATE OR NEUTRALIZE THEIR RIVALS IN THE LEFT, THE ANARCHISTS AND THE SOCIALISTS. THEIR AIM WAS TO ESTABLISH THEIR HEGEMONY, EVEN AT THE COST OF THE WAR EFFORT. IN EFFECT THEIR ACTIVITIES WERE AN EXTENSION TO SPAIN OF STALIN'S PURGES WITHIN THE SOVIET UNION AND THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT.

4. THE PCE'S ACTIVITIES AS AN OPPORTUNISTIC, SOVIET-CONTROLLED, AND FOREIGN-ORIENTED PARTY SEVERELY CRIPPLED THE WAR EFFORT. JOAQUIN MAURIN, WHO WITH ANDRES NIN BROKE WITH THE PCE TO FORM A NON-STALINIST COMMUNIST PARTY AND CONFIDENTIAL

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WHO SURVIVED THE CIVIL WAR BECAUSE, UNLIKE NIN, HE WAS CAPTURED BY FRANCO RATHER THAN BY THE COMMUNISTS (NIN WAS TORTURED TO DEATH IN ONE OF THE SECRET PRISONS RUN BY THE SOVIET SECRET POLICE OUTSIDE THE CONTROL OF THE REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT), HAS WRITTEN: "FROM THE MOMENT IN WHICH THE ALTERNATIVE WAS POSED, BEGINNING IN JUNE 1937, BETWEEN THE COMMUNIST PARTY, AT THE ORDERS OF MOSCOW, OR THE OPPOSING MILITARY REGIME, REACTIONARY BUT SPANISH, THE CONCLUSION OF THE CIVIL WAR WAS PREDETERMINED."

5. THE PCE IS THUS FORCED TO BRING TO THE CURRENT SPANISH POLITICAL SITUATION SOME AWKWARD HISTORICAL BAGGAGE. INDEED, IT MAY APPEAR AS THE ENEMY NOT ONLY OF THE RIGHT,

AGAINST WHICH IT FOUGHT, BUT ALSO OF THE LEFT, WHICH IT SOUGHT TO DESTROY. ITS IMAGE IS NOT HELPED BY THE FACT THAT ITS SECRETARY GENERAL SANTIAGO CARRILLO ALLEGEDLY

HELPED TO FINGER SPANISH LEFTISTS FOR EXECUTION DURING THE CIVIL WAR. MOREOVER, THE PARTY WHICH NOW APPEARS TO BE THE PCE'S MAJOR RIVAL ON THE LEFT IN POST-FRANCO SPAIN -- THE PSOE -- IS THE SAME SOCIALIST PARTY AGAINST WHICH THE PCE SUCCESSFULLY JOCKEYED FOR POSITION DURING THE CIVIL WAR. WHILE THE PSOE'S CURRENT LEADERSHIP COMES FROM A POST-CIVIL WAR GENERATION, THE PARTY'S HISTORICAL BITTERNESS ABOUT ITS POPULAR FRONT EXPERIENCES PRESUMABLY LINGERS ON IN THE MIND OF THE PSOE LEADERSHIP THOUGH IT HAS BEEN MUTED IN THE PSOE'S PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS AGAINST THE PCE.

6. CARRILLO BEGAN TO CHANGE THE PCE'S TUNE CONSIDERABLY IN THE MID-1950'S IN A DRIVE TO SHOW INDEPENDENCE FROM MOSCOW, TO ADAPT TO SPANISH CONDITIONS, AND POSSIBLY TO STEAL A MARCH ON HIS RIVALS IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. THE PCE HAS BECOME A VOCAL SUPPORTER OF POLITICAL PLURALISM AND THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS, THOUGH SOME COMMITMENTS ARE MORE HEDGED THAN THOSE OF THE PCI, THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY. IT HAS DISTANCED ITSELF FROM MOSCOW ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS: IT WAS A STRONG CRITIC OF THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, IT HAS CHALLENGED THE SOVIET POSITION ON CHINA, IT HAS TAKEN A "NATIONAL" POSITION ON SOVIET EFFORTS TO CONTROL THE MOVEMENT, AND IT IS CURRENTLY LINED UP AGAINST SOVIET EFFORTS TO STAGE-MANAGE THE EUROPEAN CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMUNIST CONFERENCE. RECENTLY CARRILLO SUGGESTED THAT A BLOC OF WESTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS WOULD HAVE A POLITICAL STRUCTURE DIFFERENT FROM THE EASTERN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS AND THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT LIKE IT, A STATEMENT FROM WHICH EVEN THE PCI FELT COMPELLED TO RECOIL. A FEW YEARS AGO THE SOVIETS EVEN TRIED TO PUT CARRILLO DOWN BY CREATING A MOSCOW-BASED RIVAL PCE, HEADED BY A CIVIL WAR GENERAL, BUT THEY ARE NOW SOFT-PEDALLING THE EFFORT.

7. WHILE IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER CARRILLO'S CAREFULLY CULTIVATED REPUTATION AS A MAVERICK HAS HELPED HIM MUCH IN TODAY'S SPAIN, THE PCE'S EFFORTS TO REVIVE A POPULAR FRONT HAVE MET WITH SOME SUCCESS. THOUGH THE PSOE HAS SO FAR STAYED OUT OF THE PCE-SPONSORED JUNTA DEMOCRATICA, REMAINING INSTEAD WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS IN THE PLATAFORMA DE CONVERGENCIA, THE TWO COALITIONS HAVE RECENTLY AGREED IN PRINCIPLE AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT TO WORK MORE CLOSELY TOGETHER THAN THEY HAVE IN THE PAST. MOREOVER, WHILE IT CANNOT BE KNOWN WITH ANY CERTAINTY DUE TO THE FORTY YEARS OF POLITICAL ATROPHY IN SPAIN, MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE SPANISH OBSERVERS BELIEVE (BASED PARTLY ON FRAGMEN-

TARY POLL DATA AND PARTLY ON FEEL) THAT THE PCE ON THE FAR LEFT AND THE FALANGISTS ON THE FAR RIGHT WOULD RECEIVE

APPROXIMATELY THE SAME ELECTORAL SUPPORT IN THE AMOUNT OF ABOUT TEN PERCENT IN AN EARLY ELECTION.

8. THE PCE HAS, HOWEVER, MADE SIGNIFICANT INROADS IN THE ILLEGAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN SPAIN. COMMUNISTS ARE THE MAJOR FORCE BEHIND MOST OF THE WORKERS' COMMISSIONS, WHICH HAVE SHOWN STRENGTH IN A NUMBER OF HEAVY INDUSTRIES. COMMUNIST SUCCESS APPEARS TO BE DUE TO THE CELL-LIKE STRUCTURE OF THE COMMISSIONS (WHICH, BEING A TRADITIONAL COMMUNIST PATTERN OF ORGANIZATION, MAXIMIZE THE PCE'S ORGANIZATIONAL TALENTS); TO THE PCE'S CONCENTRATION ON BREAD-AND-BUTTER ECONOMIC ISSUES RATHER THAN POLITICAL QUESTIONS; TO THE FACT THAT THE PSOE-AFFILIATED UGT -- THE LEADING SPANISH UNION BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR -- HAS DELIBERATELY WORKED OUTSIDE THE WORKERS' COMMISSIONS; AND TO THE FACT THAT THE MAJOR ILLEGAL FREE TRADE UNIONS IN

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SPAIN TODAY -- THE SOCIALIST UGT AND THE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL-IST US0 -- HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO WORK TOGETHER OR UNITE IN OPPOSITION TO THE COMMUNISTS IN THE WORKERS' COMMISSIONS AND ADDITIONALLY REMAIN SOMEWHAT FRAGMENTED THEMSELVES.

9. THE PCE IS OFTEN COMPARED TO THE PCI, WITH WHICH IT IS ALLIED IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SOVIET HEGEMONY. THE TWO PARTIES ARE IN FACT DIFFERENT IN IMPORTANT WAYS:

A. THE PCE, BECAUSE OF ITS ROLE AS A SOVIET INSTRUMENT IN THE CIVIL WAR, HAS A LEGACY OF DOMESTIC ENEMIES ON THE LEFT AS WELL AS THE RIGHT. UNLIKE THE PCE, THE PCI WAS AN ANTI-FASCIST RESISTANCE FORCE (THOUGH THOUSANDS OF SPANISH COMMUNISTS IN EXILE DID FIGHT IN THE FRENCH RESISTANCE) AND EMERGED FROM THE UNDERGROUND AS A MAJOR ITALIAN POLITICAL PARTY LEGITIMIZED BY ITS RESISTANCE ROLE. AFTER THE WAR, THE PCI HAD NO CHOICE, UNLESS IT WANTED TO BE A SMALL STALINIST PARTY, BUT TO ADAPT ITSELF TO ITALIAN CONDITIONS. IT THEREFORE PROCLAIMED AN ITALIAN ROAD TO SOCIALISM AND ACCEPTED WORKING INSIDE THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM AS THE BEST MEANS OF ACHIEVING POWER. THUS, WHILE THE PCI'S BEHAVIOR DOES NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT ACCEPTANCE OF THE RULES OF THE DEMOCRATIC GAME BUT RATHER THE PRESSURES EXERTED ON IT BY THE FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES, HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE PERMITTED IT TO PROJECT A MORE POSITIVE IMAGE DOMESTICALLY THAN THE PCE. IT MUST BE SAID, AS WELL, THOUGH, THAT THE PCE, UNDER CARRILLO'S LEADERSHIP, IS TRYING TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT IT PLAYS IN SPAIN THE GAME THAT THE PCI IS PLAYING IN ITALY. THE PCE IS SAYING THAT IT IS TOO POWERFUL AND TOO WELL ORGANIZED AMONG THE WORKING CLASS TO BE IGNORED AND THAT IT IS ALSO "LOVABLE," I.E., COMMITTED

TO DEMOCRACY.

B. THE PCI HAS A PROVEN ELECTORAL BASE IN ITALY, HAVING WON AT LEAST A FIFTH OF THE VOTE IN EVERY ELECTION SINCE 1953. WHILE THERE WERE NO FREE ELECTIONS IN SPAIN UNDER FRANCO, THERE IS NO PERSUASIVE INDICATION THAT THE PCE HAS EVER HAD THAT KIND OF VOTE-GETTING ABILITY.

C. THE STRENGTH OF THE NON-COMMUNIST ITALIAN FORCES AND ITALY'S CHOICE OF ALLIANCE WITH THE WEST PLACED CONSTRAINTS
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ON ANY PCI NON-DEMOCRATIC LENINIST TENDENCIES. WHETHER ITS SUPPORT OF 11 MILLION VOTERS WOULD CONSTITUTE AT LEAST SOME MORTGAGE ON ITS PROFESSED COMMITMENT TO PLURALISTIC DEMOCRACY IS A MOOT QUESTION, ANSWERABLE ONLY IF IT WERE TO GAIN POWER AND BE FREED OF ITS PRESENT CONSTRAINTS. BUT THE PCE THROUGH MOST OF ITS HISTORY A CADRE AND CLANDESTINE PARTY -- HAS NOT HAD SUCH AN EXPOSURE TO DEMOCRATIC FORMS AT ALL, AT LEAST NOT SINCE THE 1930'S WHEN IT ABUSED THEM. ITS STATEMENTS ON DEMOCRACY ARE NOT ANCHORED IN THE SUPPORT OF ANY POPULAR FOLLOWING, NOR PROBABLY ARE THEY SHARED BY ALL PCE CADRES, AS CARRILLO'S OCCASIONAL DEFENSIVE STATEMENTS ATTEST.

10. THE ISSUE OF THE PCE'S ROLE IN THE SPANISH POLITICAL SYSTEM IS IMPORTANT SINCE THE ENTIRE LEFT OPPOSITION IS UNITED IN DEMANDING THE LEGALIZATION OF THE PCE. FOR INSTANCE, THE PSOE, USING ARGUMENTS SIMILAR TO THOSE OF MARIO SOARES ABOUT THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY, ADVOCATES PCE LEGALIZATION, BOTH OUT OF PRINCIPLE AND IN ORDER TO DENY THE PCE A MARTYR IMAGE. (HOWEVER, THE PSOE HAS NOT CONDITIONED ITS OWN PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS, WHICH THE GOS ADVOCATES, ON LEGALIZATION OF THE PCE). THE NEW SPANISH GOVERNMENT HAS REFUSED TO LEGALIZE THE PCE, PARTLY OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INNATE CONSERVATISM AND PARTLY BECAUSE OF THE DANGER OF A STRONG REACTION FROM THE RIGHT (INCLUDING IN PARTICULAR THE MILITARY). THE USG SHARES THE GOS SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE PCE AS A TRUSTWORTHY PARTICIPANT AND AGREES THAT LEGALIZATION OF THE PCE AT THIS TIME WOULD BE RISKY, IN PART BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT WOULD PROVOKE A MILITARY REACTION, AND IN PART BECAUSE THE POLITICAL CENTER IS NOT YET WELL ORGANIZED. WE ARE THUS NOT INCLINED TO URGE PCE LEGALIZATION ON THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT. WE REGARD LEGALIZATION AS A TACTICAL QUESTION ON WHICH WE SHOULD NOT GET OUT IN FRONT OF THE GOS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT OTHER EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS OR POLITICAL PARTIES SHOULD VIEW THE LEGALIZATION ISSUE AS A CRITERION FOR JUDGING PROGRESS TOWARD DEMOCRATIZATION IN SPAIN.

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